DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 275 152 FL 016 050

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TITLE In Search of the Key: Research and Practice in Composition.
PUB DATE Mar 83
NOTE 14p.; In: Handscombe, Jean, Ed.; And Others. On TESOL '83. The Question of Control. Selected Papers from the Annual Convention of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (17th, Toronto, Canada, March 15-20, 1983); see FL 015 035.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; Diaries; *English (Second Language); Error Patterns; Higher Education; Research Needs; Second Language Instruction; Writing (Composition); *Writing Exercises; *Writing Instruction; *Writing Processes; *Writing Research

ABSTRACT

It is important that teachers help students to realize that writing is not simply a product, or a means to an end, but an exploratory, cyclical process. Research has shown that skilled writers conceptualize the effect of their writing as a whole, as a generative process, whereas unskilled writers are distracted by surface-level features and are less aware of the exploratory nature of writing. In light of these findings, methods are proposed for teachers to involve students in the composing process and thereby better prepare them to become independent writers. Some of these activities include: allowing students to be creative and purposeful in their writing; initiating free-writing activities that develop skills for exploring and discovering fresh ideas; and observing students' writing processes closely and noting areas of difficulty. (TR)

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In Search of the Key: Research and Practice in Composition

Vivian Zamel

There is a Sufi story that goes something like this:

A neighbor finds the sage on his hands and knees searching the ground.
"What have you lost, oh wise one?" the neighbor asks.
"My key," answers the sage. And the neighbor gets down on hands and knees to help.
"Where did you drop it?" the neighbor asks after a few minutes of searching.
"At home," answers the sage.
"Then why, for heaven's sake, are you looking here?" asks the neighbor.
The sage answers, "The light is better here."

This tale is a metaphor for the type of research and pedagogy that for a long time predominated in native language composition. Researchers and teachers felt more comfortable looking for answers in the bright light of experimental conditions where written products could be analyzed, results measured and tabulated, and methods of instruction compared and then prescribed. However, to go back to our tale, if the key is elsewhere, bright light is not going to help us find it. And it is this recognition that has resulted in the current interest in the composing process and the behaviors that this process involves. Researchers and teachers are recognizing that examining product alone tells us very little about what underlies the product, in much the same way that language performance may reveal little about competence. They realize that if we are to have some impact on the product, on the performance, we must inform ourselves about what preceded it. And while this has meant searching for answers in not quite so bright a light as previous traditional research designs, at least these researchers are beginning to feel that they are coming closer to finding, if not the key, then certainly some clues about what writing entails and, hence, what the teaching of writing should involve.

This investigation into what Maxine Hairston (1982:84) calls the "intangible process" has revealed the complexity of writing behavior. Composing has been

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found to be non-linear, recursive, and convoluted (see, for example, Emig 1971, Perl 1980b, Rose 1980, Sommers 1980). It seems that writing cannot necessarily be broken down into neat categories such as pre-writing, writing, and rewriting, for revision and invention have been observed to occur throughout the act of composing. And because writers do not necessarily know what they are going to say before they begin to write, composing is the means whereby they discover their ideas.

With attempts to investigate the composing process have come studies that have examined the writing behaviors of skilled and unskilled writers. Researchers have worked under the assumption that by studying what proficient writers do, we will have a basis upon which not only to evaluate the appropriateness of our classroom methods but also to develop instructional approaches that will better meet the needs of those who are less proficient. Interestingly enough, this is the same assumption that underlies much recent work in second language acquisition. Descriptions of good and poor language learning strategies (Stern 1980), published introspective journals describing language learning experiences (Bailey 1980, Schumann 1980), studies of language learning in the classroom and in natural settings (Krashen 1982, d'Anglejan 1978), and first-hand interviews with language learners (Stevick 1981) are all attempts to discover how learners learn so that we may then determine how teachers should teach.

Case studies, based by and large on the analysis of "think aloud" protocols of skilled and unskilled writers[1] have revealed that skilled writers review what they have already written in order to move forward, that the act of evaluating one's writing leads to discovery (see, for example, Flower and Hayes 1981, Perl 1980a and 1980b, Pianko 1979, Sommers 1980). Furthermore, as experienced and proficient writers reconsider what they have already written, they conceptualize the effect of their draft as a whole, and are therefore less concerned and distracted by surface-level features of writing. If necessary, these writers then modify or rewrite their drafts because they understand that this strategy will help them more closely approximate meaning. In contrast to these writers, unskilled and inexperienced writers are less aware of the cyclical and exploratory nature of composing and do not employ the holistic strategies of more skilled writers. While they do reread before continuing to write, they pause more often to do so and are far more concerned with local problems that arise.

While findings of process-centered studies and their implications for the classroom dominate the current literature on the teaching of writing in L1,[2] research into the composing processes of ESL students is almost negligible. We are, however, beginning to recognize the importance of this line of research. Jacobs (1982), in her comparative study of the written work of eleven university students, five of whom spoke English as a second language, was able to observe these students while they composed and interview them about the difficulties they were experiencing. Her data indicate that composing constraints may have more to do with students' ability to compose essays than difficulties with the mechanics of language. She found, for example, that the complexity of the assignment and the students' own misconceptions about how to meet the requirements of the assignment may be more prob-

[1]Questions have been raised about the extent to which verbalizing aloud is similar to silent composing. For discussions of the problems inherent in this particular research technique, see Cooper and Holzman 1983, Faigley and Witte 1981, Voss 1983.

[2]For a more systematic review of these studies, see Zamel 1982.

lematical than linguistic background. Edelsky's (1982) recent study of the first and second language writing of nine bilingual children also suggests that composing constraints, and not primarily language, influence what second language learners produce on paper. Her comparison of L1 and L2 writing supports the notion that writing involves the "orchestration" of multiple sub-systems which produce a text and that writing in a first language means being able to "juggle and mesh" these systems (1982:214), a point that has been made by native language writing theorists like Flower and Hayes (1981) and Smith (1982). In accordance with such a view, it is hypothesized that what writers already know about the writing process from the first language—about, for example, strategies for planning a text, situational demands, audience considerations, the "shuttling back-and-forth movements" that Perl (1980b:369) has observed in writers—"is applied to rather than interferes with writing in another language" (Edelsky 1982:214). Similarly, Lay's (1982) investigation of the composi[4]g processes of ESL adult learners, a case study that was based on an analysis of "think aloud" protocols and interviews with six Chinese college students, indicates that "many of the composing strategies used by native language students—rereading topics, going back and forth in a text, re-evaluating organization, asking questions, changing vocabulary, the different levels of editing—are also present in second language learners" (1982:406). Like Edelsky, her findings suggest that language in and of itself is not to be viewed as problematical. She points out, for example, that the students that she observed "translated key words into the first language to get a stronger impression and association of ideas for the essays" (1982:406). And the more translations there were into the native language, the better the essays were found to be in terms of overall organization and presentation of ideas. Furthermore, like Jacobs (1982), Lay pointed to the constraints of the task itself and how they may influence composing strategies, for certain topics induced more native language translations than others. Jones (1981, 1982a, 1982b) has likewise provided us with insight into the writing behaviors of ESL students. In one study, in which seven ESL students were videotaped while they composed aloud, Jones (1982b) found that ESL students, like their native language counterparts, had problems with the process itself, as was suggested by Jacobs' (1982) work. In another study, Jones (1981) videotaped nine ESL students as they each wrote three essays. He adopted Krashen's (1982) framework of the monitor model to pinpoint and analyze the differences between the writing behaviors of a monitor underuser, one who seldom monitors, even when the opportunity to do so exists, and a monitor over-user, one who is overly concerned with rules and correctness. Clearly neither one of these writers seemed to demonstrate the composing behaviors of more experienced or skilled writers, behaviors that seem to indicate optimal monitor use. The over-user was determined to formulate ideas and pause frequently to polish the text at the same time, while the under-user wrote more extensive pieces of text but attended to little more than surface-level revisions. Moreover, this study again pointed to the influence of discourse type on composing behaviors, for the personal essays required less planning time than the other writing tasks. In yet a third study, Jones (1982a) observed the writing processes of a good and poor ESL writer as each composed aloud in order to discover why poor writers may leave out rhetorical information that good writers include. He found that the poor writer was "much more constrained by the actual text she had created" (1982a:4) and was less able to distance herself from it. The good writer, on the other hand, was able to evaluate her ideas with reference to large writing goals. Thus, while the poor writer had a harder

time at the local level, struggling with one sentence at a time, the good writer was concerned more with meeting the needs of the overall text and postponed editing in order not to interrupt the process of generating ideas. Jones hypothesizes that the problems of the poor writer stem not from language difficulties but from the fact that she doesn't have "efficient strategies for writing," for she never learned to compose (1982a:8) and thus echoes some of the conclusions of the L2 composing studies cited thus far.

Finally, my own investigations (Zamel 1982 and 1983) into the composing processes of ESL students, the first based on the self-reports and written work of eight proficient ESL writers, the second based primarily on the observation of six advanced ESL students while they composed, indicate that skilled ESL writers experience writing as an exploratory and generative process, revising their papers, recording new ideas, and shifting directions throughout the process. These students seemed to interact with and react to their texts, creating meaning while assessing it at the same time. While the changes that occurred at first were global, it was toward the end of the process, after a series of drafts, that surface-level features of writing were primarily attended to. Thus, although there were language-related difficulties, these difficulties did not seem to interrupt the flow of the ongoing process; these writers had devised strategies that allowed them to pursue the development of their ideas without being sidetracked by lexical and syntactic problems. In contrast to these writers, the least skilled ESL writers seemed to have a very different understanding of what composing entailed. Like Jones' unskilled writer, they paused often and between short chunks of discourse, prematurely attending to local concerns of usage and expression and rarely making changes that affected meaning. they acted as if writing were a static transcription of parts rather than the creation of a whole discourse. They did not seem to understand that composing required the reevaluation and revision of one's ideas and produced, instead, second and third drafts that were basically neater copies of their first ones.

In sum, research into second language composing processes seems to corroberate much of what we have learned from research in first language writing. Of course, much further research into second language composing processes is necessary to determine the extent to which these findings are generalized. We need to explore the notion that writing strategies and behaviors are universal and applied across languages, as has recently been observed by Widdowson (1983), by observing students compose in both languages and then comparing their L1 and L2 writing. We need to find out if a minimum level of language competence is required before students are able to view writing in a second language as a "process of discovering meaning" (Zamel 1982). But let us return to our research to date. Composing in a second language has been found to be an extremely complex undertaking, but it seems that this complexity has more to do with the constraints imposed by the writing task itself than with linguistic difficulties.[3] While ESL students must certainly deal with concerns that are linguistic-specific, it seems that it is their writing strategies and behaviors and not primarily language proficiency that determine composing skill. Thus, like inexperienced or basic native language writers, unskilled ESL writers seem to have a very limited and limiting notion of what composing

[3]It is interesting to note that this finding, with specific reference to writing, reinforces our growing recognition of the effects of discourse constraints on second language acquisition. For an overview of recent research in second language acquisition see Larsen-Freeman (1981).

involves, and skilled ESL writers, like good native language writers, seem to be aware of the various dimensions and demands of composing and how and when to attend to these demands.

How then do these findings translate into classroom practices? Students must be given the opportunity to experience and work through the process of composing. They need to be given to understand that writers do not necessarily know beforehand what they will say, that composing, as Berthoff (1980) puts it, is the making of meaning out of chaos. The composition classroom, rather than concerning itself only with learning to write, should be a place where students are writing to learn (see, for example, Emig 1977, Irmscher 1979, Knoblauch and Brannon 1983). Once students become convinced that discovery takes place while composing, that the act of writing itself may generate thoughts and ideas, they may come to view writing as a meaningful and important undertaking. But how is it that we as writing teachers of ESL students can promote this understanding? How can we convince our students that writing is purposeful?

First of all, we can begin to question whether our more traditional approaches will lead our students toward these goals: Will practice with outlining, thesis sentences, and topic sentences encourage students to explore their thoughts on paper, or will they lock students into rigid formulaic frameworks that may produce organized but entirely predictable and vapid essays? Will models that students are given to analyze and imitate provide these students with the experience of forming and reforming their ideas again and again until what they really want to say is finally expressed? Is assigning tasks that are worked on at home, (perhaps in one sitting the night before the paper is due), and then collecting and grading them going to promote in students either the understanding that one draft is not enough or that the teacher's comments may represent the reactions of other readers as well? What notion of writing does attending primarily to grammar and usage transmit to the students? To what extent are students likely to take risks in their writing, to elaborate upon ideas that are meaningful to them, if they are by and large reinforced to play it safe and follow certain prescriptive rules?

The answers to these questions are obvious. So let us return to the original question: What can we as teachers do? For one thing, our students must be given time to do multi-draft assignments so that each draft brings them closer to approximating what they want to say. Thus, the process they are working through is a repeated and ongoing effort. As we respond to these drafts, we should attend to the ideas expressed and formulate questions and comments that help students reconsider the logic and clarity of their ideas. And these questions and comments, if they are to enable students to go beyond their first attempts must be instructional. Rather than directing a student to "Be more specific" or asking "What do you mean?", one should indicate explicitly the kind of information that would help clarify, elaborate or explicate the writer's meaning. These responses are by their very nature difficult to illustrate since they connect with and refer to a specific text.

Teachers, however, should not be the students' only readers. Classroom time should be given over to workshop-type collaborative activities in which students comment and raise questions about each other's writing. This type of dialogue can be modeled or structured by the teacher by providing students with a set of questions that they should consider as they respond to student writing, questions that at first ask for easily arrived at holistic responses but that eventually ask for more precise responses (Harris 1978). Or perhaps the class as a whole can read pieces of writing

and formulate together the kinds of questions that they believe writers should address. Students can also compare their own paragraph by paragraph summaries of their writing with the summaries written by other students in the classroom. The comparison of their comments and those of the other readers then becomes the basis for the next construction of the paper. Berthoff (1981), Johnson (1983) and Raimes (1983) recommend that students be encouraged to work together to consider what one can anticipate as one moves from one piece of discourse to the next. Ponsot and Deen (1982) suggest that students listen to each other's writing after which they write down their observations. They indicate that because listening is more immediate, direct and entertaining, it helps students pay attention and at the same time better establishes a community of writers. The observations students are encouraged to make are descriptive, rather than judgmental or subjective, and because these observations are written down, students are given yet another opportunity to practice writing.

Activities such as these help develop in the students the ability to comment about ideas in writing, an ability that is then applied to their own writing (see Brannon et al. 1982 and Ponsot and Deen 1982 for accounts of how students learned to write by internalizing their readers' reactions). Furthermore, these activities promote an understanding of one of the important constraints of the act of composing, the needs of the reader/audience, for it is through activities of this sort that writers become more and more aware of the effects their writing has upon a reader. And "the more the writer is exposed to this kind of feedback, the better able he is to begin building some generalizations about the future audiences he will write for" (Harris 1978:45).

A sense of audience, however, can be established at the outset as well, since the information included in a piece of writing, the direction it will go in, the assumptions it will work upon, even the type of language it will use is determined to some extent by the needs of one's readers. Thus, assignments can build into them the audience for which the writing is intended. Flower believes that it is this sense of audience that helps writers improve, and she thus underlines the importance of replacing vague assignments with "vivid, realistic assignments centered around a clearly defined *real* reader" (1981b:67). Her writing text (1981a) consists of "rhetorical problems" which students attempt to solve by addressing a particular reader. A *case method* approach, which likewise stipulates a hypothetical reader, is another way in which audience can be established. Unlike most writing assignments that fail to provide the student with a sense of purpose or context, cases, because they attempt to create true-to-life situations which require a response to a particular reader, are more like writing in the real world. Cases thus have the "power of authenticity . . . and can provoke inquiry and discussion by their very nature as open-ended writing problems faced by real people" (Weiss 1980:136–137). As students consider the data presented and analyze these problem-centered situations, they learn to develop strategies that will help them transform the data into texts that "meet the informational needs of a specific audience" (Berkenkotter 1981:396). And the extent to which audience constraints influence writing can further be illustrated by directing students to work on the same case but to address more than one possible reader, each of whom has different concerns and therefore requires a different response.[4]

[4]For a more detailed description of case methods, see Tedlock 1981. For texts based on this approach to the teaching of writing, see Field and Weiss (1979) and Teclock and Jarvie (1981).

In addition to in-class workshops in which writing is discussed, class time should be given over to actual writing. For example, by allowing students to engage in free writing, that is, writing non-stop for a predetermined period of time in order to "release thoughts and images into visible language" (Ponsot and Deen 1982:35), we may help them realize that ideas are suggested by the writing itself, that writing without pause to examine and judge can lead to the exploration of different possibilities. Having students write freely about, perhaps, the reading that had been assigned and how it is related to a topic that had already been discussed in class, or about the issues brought up during a class debate or other focused discussion, demonstrates to students that writing in and of itself is a heuristic. And because free-writing is not evaluated against the criteria applied to more formal assignments, it encourages students to take risks and to experiment. It is this kind of writing that may first produce, as it sometimes does with my students, statements about having nothing to say but that, half-way down the page, results in the articulation of kernel ideas. Teachers of course can also participate in this in-class writing so that they can both become more sensitive to the writing experiences of their students and share with them the products of their explorations, products that are likely to be rough and disorganized but within which the seeds of the next draft can be found.

In the same way that free-writing may help students find what Perl (1980a:31) calls a "wedge" into a topic or idea, journals can promote an exploration of one's experiences and observations. Journal writing serves to involve students in writing in which they can concentrate on what they have to say without worrying about how to say it and thus both reduces anxiety and often produces some of their best and most original writing. It also gives teachers the opportunity to respond to ideas and content rather than form and mechanics, a practice which I and other ESL teachers I have spoken with find freeing, even exhilarating. Responding to student journals in this way can even take the form of teacher journals through which teachers not only react to their students but reveal their own thoughts, ideas, observations, a technique that has been used successfully in ESL classrooms (Spack and Sadow 1983). The journal thus sets up a real, communicative dialogue and in a natural and obvious way reinforces the notion that writing is the making of reading. Furthermore, journal entries can be used as points of departure for assignments which build upon them. For example, a personal experience can become the narrative portion of a longer essay whose goal it is to make inferences or generalizations about this experience.

Journals, however, need not be confined to the recording of subjective or expressive writing alone. Rather, they are "places where you can generate and think through ideas for paper topics, work out a problem presented in class, log experiences that are a part of a course, record thoughts and insights that you think might be useful, but are not exactly sure how" (Maimon et al. 1981:20). Journals allow students to test out hypotheses, create their own perspectives or make new connections with reference to the course content. And by doing so, their teachers may discover underlying problems to which they can then respond, which in turn facilitates further writing/learning:

> The concern is to create intellectual dialogue as a way of stimulating more learning, to use writing as a means of . . . communicating the honest extent of the writer's understanding, including difficulties, inadequacies of insight, imperfect or unproductive connections among ideas and information, so that

> a more experienced learner can provide, through reinforcing commentary, some new directions for exploration (Knoblauch and Brannon 1983:471).

Journals can also be used in much the same way that commonplace books were once used, a place where students can summarize or react to their reading. These summaries or commentaries can then be incorporated into later, more complex writing tasks. For example, journal entries that summarize differing arguments surrounding a controversial issue can be discussed with reference to each other in a later piece of writing. Sequencing writing in this way helps students work through the assimilation and synthesizing skills that are at the heart of most academically oriented essays. Furthermore, in the process of turning their private journal writing into public expository prose, students would gain insight into how writer-based prose differs from reader-based prose, to use Flower's (1979) terms. And by asking students to read their journals, not only write in them, the journal becomes defined as a text itself and thus validates journal writing as a method for ordering, representing and interpreting one's experiences and perceptions (Bartholomae 1982:36–37).

Other writing assignments can likewise be used to build upon one another. Thus, students can be directed to use previously written work as the basis for a comparison paper, for example. In addition to having something to say, students learn how the same phenomena can be viewed from a different perspective, and that this shift in perspective establishes new and critical relationships. I recently had students read, discuss and write about several of Studs Terkel's (1972) interviews. They then did their own interviews and recorded the information they obtained and formed generalizations about them. As a final writing task students determined the extent to which their own findings compared with those of Terkel. Such a series of assignments produced writing that was rich and original. It helped demonstrate the evolving nature of composing, not only with reference to the particular task at hand, but with reference to the entire sequence of tasks. It allowed students to actually experience the process of comparing data. And it helped students understand that how one chooses to view the world determines how one organizes it.

Students also have to be taught that the different sub-processes of composing should not be attended to all at once. While some skilled writers may be able to juggle the different writing demands and constraints at the same time, correcting grammar and punctuation while still exploring ideas, inexperienced or beginning writing students may need to learn that certain aspects of writing should be addressed before others and that a premature focus on correctness may prevent exploration. This is especially the case in the ESL classroom where students are still acquiring language and where a concern with form and convention may precede or entirely ignore the issue of a writer's intention. ESL students, like other writing students, need to be encouraged to explore their ideas and thoughts first and foremost and need to be provided with feedback that indicates that this is in fact the most important feature of writing. They should be given to understand that attention to correctness is a sub-task that can be relegated to the final part of the process. Again, this understanding can only be promoted if our feedback and instruction reinforce this notion. Sommers (1982) recently pointed out that even when we want more comprehensive revisions, students conceive of revision as chiefly the altering or improving of surface-level features because our comments seem to underline the importance of these features. A typical comment begins with the vague

"You have some good ideas but . . ." and is then followed by an unwieldy list of rules and the ways in which the student failed to use them. How likely is the comment about ideas to be taken seriously?

Surely our experiences have shown us that a concern with correctness at the outset may lead to less error-ridden revisions, but revisions that show basically little improvement. Nor do these corrected revisions guarantee that these very errors will not appear in future papers. Furthermore, an obsession with error and mechanics may ultimately lead to serious writing blocks. It seems then that a more appropriate procedure would be to not focus on these features of writing until the students are engaged by the writing, until students have experienced the process of clarifying thought, until students grasp the notion that writing can help make sense of their experiences. As Rose recently put it, "Error vigilance creates safe, not meaningful prose. We have to allow our writers to be ambitious and to err" (1983:128). Furthermore, since revision may mean that what has already been written may be reconstructed or even omitted, concentrating on local problems at first is not only inappropriate but may even be detrimental, a point illustrated by several case studies (see, for example, Newkirk 1981, Rose 1980, Sommers 1981) and underlined by Miller: "Treating one's writing as a product to be judged while it remains open to the possibility of revision may prevent completion or at least make improvement impossible" (1982:181). It is at the end of the process, when ideas are being refined and polished, that a concern with correctness is warranted. It is at this point, when, as Elbow (1973:17) has put it, "You end up thinking something you couldn't have started out thinking," that the critical eye and the editing should come into play. It is in this way that students may come to be, to use Krashen's (1978) term, "optimum monitor users," employing the monitor to control output, but not letting it obstruct the flow of discourse.

These are just some of the ways in which we can involve our students in the composing process and thereby better prepare them to become independent writers. Before concluding, however, I should like to underline one of the most important dimensions of this instructional approach: involving students in the experience of working through the composing process provides teachers with information about the strategies, rules, and patterns that students apply in their writing. We can find out, for example, that writing may suffer because students pause too often, those frequent interruptions keeping them from viewing their writing holistically, as was discovered by one teacher who observed an ESL student trying to write:

> It was only when I watched him write that I realized how much his determination to spell correctly was hindering his writing. A sophisticated user of his native language, he would not permit himself to commit gross errors in English spelling. Because of this he paused so long on the task of spelling certain words that when he moved on, he had lost the flow of the sentence. The next mental formulation of what he would write did not join smoothly with what he had written previously, nor could he easily recapture the original sentence by rereading what he had written (Harris 1982:65).

We may find that they are blocked because they have no strategies for exploration. With reference to local errors, we may find out, as I did from the students I observed, that the errors are not due to carelessness, but the result of very deliberate attempts to make the language conform to some system. For example, one student omitted

the "s" on a second verb because she had already used the inflection on the first verb and thought it was not necessary to add another one. We may find that misspellings occur even after students have looked up words in the dictionary, these students obviously not aware that dictionaries can be used to check both word form and word meaning. This does not mean that we should all undertake painstaking and time-consuming observational studies. But we can observe students writing as we circulate in class, helping them individually, pointing out inconsistencies, raising questions about both global and local problems. We can ask students, as Bartholomae (1980) did in his study of error, to read their papers to us aloud so that we can determine which errors are performance-based rather than problems of general linguistic competence. I recently observed a class in which a student was reading his argument to a small group of students. Every time he came to the word which he had written as "is," he read it aloud as "in," and every time he came to the word which he had written as "in," he read it aloud as "is." While, at the time, I could not immediately determine the cause for such a strange phenomenon, upon reflection it could very well have been the case that this student was experiencing the kinds of perceptual problems that Laurence (1976) and Bartholomae (1980) have observed with reference to their own writing students. By proceeding in this way, by intervening throughout the process to discover what students can and cannot do, we learn how to better instruct them. This is in fact what language acquisition theorists have proposed with reference to language teaching, that it is what students already know and what they still need to learn that should determine our syllabus and form the basis of our instruction (see, for example, Corder 1967 and Brumfit 1979). It is their own "communicative attempts in the target language" that should be the "starting-off point of our instruction" (Taylor 1983:84). It is the "things which will reveal themselves" if an attempt is made "to discover what students do know" that suggest what should be taught (Larsen-Freeman 1981:121). A process approach provides us with valuable information about our students' knowledge and needs and better insures, to return again to Krashen's (1978) terminology, that teacher input and student intake are more closely aligned.

All of this does not suggest that we have all the answers. Far from it. We are still groping in the dark, searching for them. But to return to our metaphor, it is reassuring to believe that if we look long enough and hard enough, we are likely to find the key.

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